

The Grapes of Wrath- Parsha Shelach *Spin It!*

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SUMMARY:	What can Parsha Shelach teach us about our perception of reality? Through the lens of modern psychology, we can learn about the behaviors of the spies and gain insight into our own cognitive biases. - <i>Submitted by Asya Gribov</i>
TOPIC(S):	Parsha Shelach, different perspectives
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will be able to see the modern-day implications of Parsha Shelach. Participants will be able to use the lens of contemporary psychology to learn from the story of the spies in Parsha Shelach. Participants will be become aware of their own biases in conveying information.
AUDIENCE:	teens, adults, any group size
TIMING:	20 minutes
APPENDICES:	Handout: Perception Quiz Handout: Images Handout: Parsha Shelach
MATERIALS NEEDED:	None
SET-UP DETAILS:	Any location, no prior set up is required

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Describe it!

How would you describe something to someone that has not seen it?

In pairs, participants take turns describing their image (from a handout) to their partner.

Is the glass half empty or half full?

Show participants a series of images. Ask participants what they see. After receiving some biased answers, ask participants to focus on saying exactly what they see without judgement.

Ask participants to reflect on their tendency to report what they see subjectively vs. objectively.

- What did you notice about your responses to the images?
- How can we change our language to be more objective? (ex: cup filled with water to the middle)
- Why do we do that?
- What can it reveal about ourselves?
- Once you form your opinion about an image – what makes you say that?
- How do you justify your perspective by what you see? And how do others, seeing the exact same thing justify their interpretation?

The story we tell ourselves

We construe information to defend our beliefs, not use info to construct our beliefs.

The glass is half empty or half full based on whether you are dehydrated or full.

Our interpretation of data is based on our own personal beliefs, context, and self-perception. And what is worse, we find evidence based on our beliefs.

Confirmation bias suggest that we don't perceive information objectively. We pick data to confirm our prejudice. Our beliefs can be influenced by how we perceive ourselves, the stories we tell ourselves.

Image of giant grapes

Think of 5 different things giant grapes can mean (other than giants)

- Different type of fruit, great land, small people, etc.

The spies: Recount the parsha, specifically the story of the spies.

What were the spies asked to do?

Moses had asked them to report the facts, not offer an assessment of the place.

How did the spies report what they saw?

Caleb: "We can go in and take possession of the land. We are able to do it."
(says someone who sees themselves as strong)

Others: "We cannot go against these people. They are giants and we are but grasshoppers." (says someone who sees themselves as weak)

- What analogy are the spies making? Is it objective or subjective?
- What can we learn about how the spies viewed themselves?

The distorted vision of the land is a reflection of how they viewed themselves as small, helpless creatures. Their perception was distorted through the filter of their own insecurities and inferiority.

Spending more time in the desert, gaining confidence, maturing, and building character was needed for the Israelites to feel confident to enter Israel.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Other connections at camp:

- How campers and counselors view various challenges at camp
- Building a growth mindset
- Building resiliency

Resources for further learning:

Teaching Children About Perspective and Perception:

<http://www.keepyourchildsafe.org/raising-children/teaching-children-about-perspectives-of-others.html>

Are You a Positive or Negative Thinker?:

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_89.htm

Children's Books:

You Are Not Small by Anna Kang, Christopher Weyant (for ages 2-6)

Flotsam by David Wiesner (for ages 5-10)

Video:

Why You Think You Are Right Even If You Are Wrong:

https://www.ted.com/talks/julia_galef_why_you_think_you_re_right_even_if_you_re_wrong_-_t-683378

Full Parsha: https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2495752/jewish/Shelach-Torah-Reading.htm